



The

Huddle

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A Moment with a Master Black Belt...

New Lean Leader Certification Launching Fall 2018

by Matthew Singh, Director of Operational Excellence



This month I wanted to take my Master Black Belt moment with each of you today to let you know about a great training

option the Center of Operational Excellence (COE) will be providing State of Nebraska team members.

We are looking to launch the Certified Lean Leader (CLL) within the next few weeks. It will be two days of classroom activities where we dive into several real world simulations of process improvement. We heard your cry for some additional training.

The White Belt is intended to introduce the basic topics related to process improvement, whereas the Yellow Belt is intended to help implement QDIP boards and the use of the 5-why's, fishbone diagrams, and other basic Lean Six Sigma tools. The Certified Lean Leader is intended for those of you who are Yellow Belt Certified and who want to dive deeper into your understanding on functional Lean topics.

Once completed, the Certified Lean Leader graduates will have exposure and an applied understanding of topics, such as 5S and Poke Yoke. It is created specifically for those of you who are yearning to continue your growth as a change agent in your everyday lives.

The Green Belt and Black Belt paths are intended for full-time practitioners at the State of Nebraska. They are both oriented toward creating subject matter experts on the topic of Lean Six Sigma. They follow DMAIC strictly whereas the Certified Lean Leader is more applicable in every day matters that we come across in our daily routines. The final training that the COE offers is the Executive Green

Belt. It is online-oriented with several hands on exercises culminating in an oral exam with the COE. It is intended for C-Level staff as selected by each cabinet member.

As we continue to grow our Lean Six Sigma network, as well as our training opportunities for State Team Members, I want to thank each and every one of you for your dedication to making the State of Nebraska the best it can be. Without all your great ideas, dedication, and project support we would not be able to accomplish what has been accomplished. We literally can't do it without you!

Gov. Ricketts Visits Green Belt Candidates



Governor Pete Ricketts recently dropped in to visit teammates working toward their Green Belt Certification.

To achieve Green Belt Certification, candidates must attend 80 hours of classroom training, pass an exam of 110 questions and three essays, and complete two process improvement projects while being mentored by COE Director Matthew Singh.

Monthly Forums Engage, Empower Teammates in Process Improvement

by Madeline Hoffer, Process Improvement Coordinator II, Department of Natural Resources



The Department of Environmental Quality, with the help of PIC Doug Barry, has started an exciting new program to get people more involved in process improvement.

Each month, leaders of morning huddles from around the agency gather for a Yellow Belt Forum to share ideas and strategies to help each other get the

most out of their huddles. Doug has been hosting the Yellow Belt Forum for three months, and it is already showing potential to improve QDIP board metrics, share process improvement ideas between divisions, and generate ideas for projects. Participants in the Yellow Belt Forum also included some newly certified Executive Green Belts, so conversations in the Forum may result in executive decision ideas in the future.

The July Yellow Belt Forum began with Doug leading the group in a brief process improvement exercise. The group had to pass a tennis ball around the room as quickly as possible while ensuring that the ball passed through each participant's hands only once, and without passing the ball to an adjacent person.

One participant felt that her quality metric needed improvement. She leads the huddle in the unit responsible for overseeing the State Revolving Fund (SRF), which provides low-interest loans and matching grants to municipalities for the construction of wastewater and drinking water systems.

The team's quality metric measures the number of documents that need to be reworked each day, with a goal of zero. The documents handled by this group include loan documents, as well as plans and specifications for the proposed water projects.

The team was concerned this metric was measuring errors that originated with outside parties who had submitted the documents, rather than the team's work quality.

Several of the other participants gave examples of quality metrics they had used, and a productive discussion ensued about how to measure rework most accurately.

Monthly huddles are an exciting way to build engagement and empower teammates to participate in every step of the improvement process.

In just three months of implementing huddles at DEQ, teammates have shared valuable ideas, discussed improved ways to measure performance, and built trust and camaraderie.

On the first try, this took over two minutes. After brainstorming and improving the process, the group managed to complete the exercise in under ten seconds by the third attempt.

Most of the time during the Yellow Belt Forum was devoted to discussion of QDIP metrics.

Members of the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund brainstorm strategies to improve their quality metric, incorporating suggestions from the monthly DEQ Yellow Belt Forum.

Pictured from left to right: John Danforth, Steve McNulty, Gautam Bhadhade, Tom Fuenning, David Lathrop, Cyril Martinmaas, Sue Wobken, Tara Sampson.



Improvements to State Patrol Hiring Deepen Candidate Pool, Save Money

by Kevin Workman, Human Resources Director, Nebraska State Patrol

In my previous employment I was first exposed to the Lean Six Sigma methodology as a HR practitioner in a supply chain environment. Lean Six Sigma was used to eliminate waste and gain efficiencies around distribution center processes. At first, I didn't really see how Lean Six Sigma could affect or benefit me in the realm of Human Resources. However, my office was located adjacent to another senior leader who was a Master Black Belt. As I worked in collaboration with him on projects, he invariably would pull in applicable Lean Six Sigma concepts and demonstrate their relevance to our work. He convinced me this methodology is not only valuable in manufacturing and supply chain environments, but also in Human Resources and other processes.

I personally witnessed many successes due to process improvement projects including full scale DMAIC efforts, as well as Kaizen events. What amazed me then was not only the tangible results of the actual improvements,

State Patrol HR Director Kevin Workman and his team explore plan monthly sourcing and recruiting efforts using the 4-Step PDCA Model.

in process improvement as Hard Savings. The Executive Decision, with its focus on Hard Savings, is a solid partner for DMAIC Projects and Kaizens which tend to produce more soft savings. Both types of savings are needed to have a healthy process improvement program.



brainstormed within the HR Division and the consensus was we needed to be more data-driven, targeted, and active in our candidate sourcing.

Next, we went to the second step – DO. We are currently utilizing PIC Mark Watson and gathering data through our QDIP Board and other sources. By gathering information on our QDIP Board, revolving around the applicant and our sourcing strategies, we were able to better identify what is producing a Return on Investment (ROI). We made the decision to create a Talent Acquisition Program in our agency that evaluates all of our current sourcing efforts and captures the efforts that are producing the best Return on Investment (ROI).

In the upcoming days, we will finish the last two steps – CHECK and ACT – to complete the PDCA model. Years ago, I was pretty skeptical about the benefit of Lean Six Sigma in the realm of human resources. It's been a journey for me and I'm grateful for those who have helped me along the way. Now, the steps that we've taken together in our organization using these methodologies will put us in the best possible position to meet staffing needs in the present and future.

What does all this mean for the Nebraska State Patrol and for the state in general? The Nebraska State Patrol's motto is "Pro Bono Publico" – "For the Public Good." To connect the dots, as the State Patrol effectively staffs our agency, then it is you and I, as citizens of the state, who ultimately benefit. The process improvement methodology has helped our agency best position itself for success through effective and efficient use of our available resources. It's a tool for your success as well!



As part of the second step of the PDCA 4-Step Process, DO, the State Patrol created a Talent Acquisition Process to determine which recruiting processes produce the best ROI.

but the excitement, bonding, and ownership of employees who participated in a project with results they were proud of. So, last year when I moved back to Nebraska and joined the State Patrol as a HR practitioner, I was glad to see the process improvement efforts in state government. I took advantage of the White and Yellow Belt Certifications and most recently finished an Executive Green Belt certification. The main objective of the Executive Green Belt is the Executive Decision, which is functionally a business decision. The Executive Decision is a great tool for producing streamlined processes resulting in savings that can be immediately realized in the agency's budget – what is known

to recruiting. The Patrol has faced strong headwinds in recruiting for officer positions due to record low unemployment and other factors. Traditional methods of recruitment are simply not producing candidates and are cost prohibitive. With the support of senior leadership, I made an executive decision to re-examine our recruiting methods and tap into candidate pools in the most efficient means available. My team and I are currently in process with these efforts.

Utilizing the PDCA Executive Decision Model, we first PLANNED. To do this, I coordinated with the agency's hard savings goal from the Governor's Office. The HR Division set SMART Goals in alignment with those goals. We

The Executive Decision is built around the four step PDCA Model – Plan, Do, Check, Act. As part of the Executive Green Belt certification process, I was asked to choose and get involved in an Executive Decision. I chose an Executive Decision that I'm currently involved with that I believed would result in hard savings for the Agency Recruiting/Advertising Budget, as well as increase the amount of talented applicants.

As is true in many agencies, the Patrol has a very limited budget dedicated

Jesse's Tool Time: Action Planning and PDCA Process

by Jesse Cushman, Process Improvement Coordinator II, Department of Health and Human Services

Welcome to the final installment of Tool Time with Jesse. I have recently accepted a new role as Program Manager in the Licensure Unit of Public Health in the Office of Medical and Specialized Health. My time writing this series has been enjoyable and has afforded me the ability to dive into the Lean Six Sigma tools in greater detail.

In the last article, we talked about the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) in relation to making an Executive Decision. In this final installment, I would like to talk about the Action Plan section of the QDIP board and specifically the use of the PDCA. The intent of the Action Plan page is to help guide the Yellow Belt to a potential solution for obstacles listed in the issues section. There are many tools available to the Yellow Belt to help him or her problem solve.

The action plan is all about working out a solution for identified issues. Occasionally, the issues section of the QDIP board will need to be refined using other Lean Six Sigma tools such as the "5 Whys" (asking why several times until you can identify the root cause of an issue or problem). When you have identified the root cause you can then brainstorm with your team on what actions should be taken to resolve the problem.

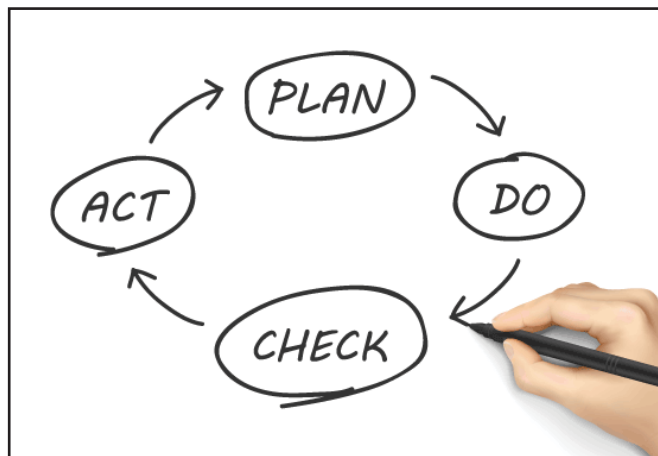
So let us walk through the steps of completing the Action Plan section of a QDIP board. Assuming you have identified an obstacle in the issues

section, you now need to determine if that issue was the root cause or if it is still just a symptom of a larger problem. There are several tools available that a certified Green Belt can help you use to identify the problem. If unsure, just ask. Once you are comfortable you have identified the root cause, you need to brainstorm with your team ways to address the issue. Sometimes we think there is nothing we can do about the

the action to be taken to resolve the issue. Then move on to who will be responsible for seeing this completed, when it will be completed, and then finally check off the completed steps of the PDCA. Remember the PDCA stands for Plan, Do, Check, and Act.

In the "Plan" step, the person responsible for completing the action, must

understand what it will take to complete that action. Once you have planned how to solve the problem, this box can be checked. The next step is to actually carry out the planned action. Once that solution has been completed and implemented the "Do" step can be checked off. Next, you need to check if the action taken impacted the problem you are trying to fix. In some cases, the problem or issue will be resolved.



root cause, for example staff on vacation. In reality, these are just more complex problems. A potential solution to staff on vacation could be to cross-train.

At times, brainstorming solutions can be difficult. If your team struggles to do this in a 5-15 minute huddle, then a Green Belt or Certified Lean Leader should be utilized to help facilitate. For the most complex issues, a full scale process improvement event may be needed. If you identify a potential solution to your problem, fill out the Action Plan section with the date the action was entered, a summary of the problem or issue, and

In these cases the "Act" step can be checked off with the "Check" step. In other cases, the action to be taken did not have the impact desired or only slightly affected the original issue. If this is the case, write a new action item with a new action plan to be taken before checking off the "Act" step, starting the PDCA cycle over again. If the problem still exists after several action plans, it may be time to call on your agency's Green Belt, to help see if there is a process improvement project that needs to be conducted.



Conversations with a Green Belt: Introducing Stan Odenthal

by Seth Fager, Process Improvement Coordinator II, Department of Health and Human Services



This month's featured Executive Green Belt is Stan Odenthal.

Stan is the Workforce Development

Director, with the Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL).

Director Odenthal recently completed his Lean Six Sigma Executive Green Belt certification through the Center of Operational Excellence (COE) at the State of Nebraska.

Creativity, Energy in Process Improvement

Before becoming an Executive Green Belt, Director Odenthal had witnessed the energy in Lean Six Sigma events and saw this as an opportunity to see the talents, skills, and creativity of the staff involved. Furthermore, this was a way to create the best possible state government by providing more effective and efficient services.

These reasons encouraged Director Odenthal to pursue his Executive Green Belt. In order to obtain this certification, he was required to complete several online modules, each with a test at the end. Director Odenthal went on to state how these were much more difficult

than previous belt certification tests and required critical thinking. Furthermore, essays were required to be written and a report to the COE Director, Matthew Singh was required.

Improved Process Saves \$50,000

Finally, an executive decision, leading to a savings was required for this certification. For his executive decision, Director Odenthal was able to find a significant cost

Director Odenthal's experience in state government began with the State of Utah where he worked as a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Case Manager for five years before moving to Nebraska to complete his Juris Doctorate and Masters in Political Science in Public Policy.

Director Odenthal began working for NDOL as a Policy Program Coordinator and then

Workforce Services Administrator before becoming the Director of the Equal Opportunity Commission and eventually returning to NDOL as the Workforce Services Director. He also lived in the Dominican Republic for two years prior to his career in state government.

Outside of work, Director Odenthal is married with three children, ages 10, 12, and 13. His free time is filled with tumbling classes

for his two youngest children and enjoying national and state parks.

Looking Toward Future Goals

When asked about advice on process improvement, Director Odenthal encourages everyone to look at the longterm perspective and how the efficiencies gained can save time for staff in the long run.



Congratulations to Workforce Development Director Stan Odenthal for completing his Executive Green Belt certification through the COE. Stan began his State career with NDOL and served as Director for the Equal Opportunity Commission before becoming NDOL director. He enjoys spending time with his wife and three children.

savings of \$50,000 over the next 18 months by choosing to not renew a contract. The contract revolved around an assessment for program participants, however a similar feature was available in another electronic system already being used. By utilizing the current system, participants were linked to available jobs in the market. This was a win-win situation that improved services and also led to a financial cost savings.





Help Us Grow Nebraska

Questions? Or have a suggestion for process improvement in your area?
Please contact your agency's Process Improvement Coordinator

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